Stopping-Places.

As the caterpillar and Alexander get to their local or physical limits, and the one of his king and the other at the end of the earth, reaches out forward or weeps for another king or end; so in the provinces of reasoned truth, which is the only sure definition of philosophy, beyond heavenly the heart and safe ground of certainty, but when we come to the outlying margin, seeing becomes more frequent and proving is out of habit, where we note our feet beginning to roam in Wood-land instead of the solider places of induction, we may, like the caterpillar out on all sides for the unknown, and not finding sure footing, turn back contented to, or like Alexander, as the story is, we may lie down on the far borders of the metaphysical field, upon pieces of by-gone systems, as the Macedonian hero lay on the sand-beach, and weep pitifully or philosophically that our intellectual world is not quite big enough. I prefer the caterpillar's method.

We are tied to the earth with a string and. Our Montgolfiers — in their balloons may frequent the skies; but the great earth will not let them stay long away from her bosom. Its loving attraction, tho' with equal sureness, Induction holds men to the fact. To be in the morning and out of the transcendental sky, to muse in the hazy mystic places of symbolism and allegory, is most pleasant, but let us call this a poetical not a philosophical pleasantness. What truth which is subtle to act upon is quite circumscribed. It is hedged round with a barrier. It demands acknowledgments. Sweet is that the beautifullest speculations begin in the region where certainty bounds meets portentous these summer thought-climates can only be dared by bold greatness. Even Genius itself cannot subsist long time upon the hypothetical ambrosia of the a priori method.

Psalm 27
Rom 8 & 11 LXXXII.

179
201
261 - 265

Mystery

11

Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out. He is excellent in power and ~~Job - XXXVII. - 23~~ in judgement: and in plenty of justice: He will not afflict // Job XXXVII-23

Utica Mohawk Jany 26. 1873

Brooklyn Nov 28. 1873

No. Andover

The first sentence of this Lect. affirms the one great mystery.- the unfathomable depth of life- in which all lesser secrets are embosomed.-

There is much in nature- which we cannot understand- Earth- sea & sky are full of problems which we cannot solve.- The geologist may trace backward the worlds history- upon the pages of the rocks- to the time when its solidified mass, was diffused through space- in formless chaos.- but his research stops there.- For not one particle of matter can he find the origin.- or explain how it was created.- The Naturalist may classify the different forms of life- and familiarize himself with the habits of all species,- He may push his theory so far as to reduce all ~~for~~ organic life to one or more primordial types.- But there he too must pause,- How it is that the single cell becomes instinct with vitality- and manifests a power of growth which man cannot create- he never has discovered. ——

There is much in the realm of mind or spirit far above our comprehension.- That mental phenomena which in all ages has lain at the basis of the worlds belief in Miracles.- (which in later times has given rise to What are known as Mesmerism & spiritualism - this mental action) is the play of an almost unknown force - in accordance with laws at which we only guess.- Even Sleep and Dreams are Mysteries - which have only been penetrated a very little way - by plausible theories.- - -

We have no definite knowledge of all this - further than to know that there is something there - which we do not comprehend -

Wherever we dig ~~down to~~ beneath the forms & manifestations of life which lie upon the surface - and reach life itself - the great animating soul of all things, be it principle or person - we reach the border of an impenetrable mystery - Touching the Almighty - we cannot find him out -

In singular contrast with this old Jewish confession of weakness - which is also the confession of modern science & Philosophy stands the confidant claim to perfect knowledge of divine things, put forth by some of our own time. - For these are people who stand ready to unfold all the plans & schemes of the almighty - who know how man was created - how he fell from a state of purity. - what vexation of spirit God suffered on his behalf. - and how he finally bethought himself of a sacrifice which He himself might make - to satisfy himself - that the children of men might escape his wrath. -

They know of any particular soul, whether it goes to heaven or hell. - and can tell what shall be the surroundings & employment of the redeemed - hereafter. - They talk with God as with a familiar spirit. - in a business tone and business manner. - (indeed the popular theology - is a commercial scheme. - for the purchase

of human souls.- The price has been paid and now the object is to transfer as much property as possible.- One is frequently shocked in our churches by the positive irreverance with which deity is addressed.- Even on the part of very devout people.- A loss of reverence must necessarily follow- when God becomes so thoroughly known.-- From familiarity with the divine, to command over his presence influence is but a single slip ——

The modern priest has boldly said, that in one respect- he is greater than God.- Since through the consecrated bread he can make the body of God- and by means of his prayers- is able to control Gods action.-- And let me ask if much of our praying ~~any orthodox theory of prayer~~- does not virtually affirm mans ability to control the infinite.-

Every petition which goes beyond asking certain gifts- that may enable us to do for ourselves.- says- Lord- do this thing for us.- ~~to things~~ is either

~~a~~ consciously impotent - or is based upon the ~~an~~ impudent assumption that God is at the service of human command or curiosity. - Talk to such people about mysteries! - they have found the almighty out long ago, - and all eternity lies open before their gaze. - - It is worthy of remark however, that since ignorance is best satisfied with its own wisdom - there may be some question as to the rightness of the information such people are ready to impart. - Jesus himself was singularly silent upon all these mysterious points. - - What he did teach concerning God and eternity was in the most general terms, or embodied in ~~a~~ parables. - I suppose he is better authority upon spiritual affairs than the church even, - and saw as far into the real nature of things! - - Yet when the Phorisees plied him with questions - he contented himself with answers which awakened doubts in their ~~own~~ minds and never hinted at them the infallible dogmas

are too often
~~are~~ wont to

with which his followers, bombard the thinking world.-- You will find it a fact of experience that they, who think they know ~~it~~ all-
~~possess~~ very little knowledge.- and cannot even tell how they know that,- They are like the worm in the fable who made the circuit of the nutshell in which he was imprisoned- and thought he had sounded the universe.--

Those whose words the ages have garnered up- as the very jewels of wisdom.- the great thinkers and discoverers- of every time.- who surely possessed mental sagacity if such a thing be possible to man,- have died feeling how little they knew- How infinite was the vast stretch of the unknown before them.-

The mental horizon always enlarges as we toil up the steps of learning.- The higher the point of view.- and the more extended the vision- the more multifold are the new objects crowding into notice- and demanding

attention - Every new truth - is but the avenue
to a score of others - and the joy of a new discovery
is soon swallowed up in the desire to know
what lies just beyond. - My conclusion is
that they who talk loudest about the schemes
of the almighty - & profess to understand all
mysteries - are precisely the ones to be least
trusted because on account of their ignorance.

In the days when the church put forth as one
of her infallible declarations - that the earth
was flat - surrounded by water - and covered by
a chrystalline dome - the mechanism of the
Universe was as simple as day light - The
Sun, Stars, & planets were made for man alone -
the only rational being beneath the angels - and
Therefore
man felt himself a very grand personage - and
magnified his little knowledge into absolute
truth. - But when he found that his world
was only one out of a countless number of
satellites - a tributary of the sun - & that the
sun -

the center of his effulgent beams.— when he made it the discovery that he was in the whole Universe of God insignificant as ~~the sands of the sea shore~~ a grain of sea driven sand in the great globe itself.— he grew more modest in his claims to wisdom,— to day he boasted as to some of scientific attainments— puts forth his theories— but is careful to tell you that they are only theories— and upon the few facts he has been able to retain,— ~~and~~ he dare not say that the next discovery will not totally change his views,— more & more is it being impressed— that out of the infinite domain of truth. he has scarcely conquered a good hold— in any direction,— — And as the voyager ~~sees~~ looks higher above him— & thinks clearer & feels like a gathering ~~in~~ with every step of advance— so does his desire to reach the hidden mantles— which it envelops so closely,—

The ~~perception~~ recognition of the unknown ever gives
rise to inquiry.— Our wonderers Thinkers are
like the sailors of olden time.— To the early
greeks— almost the whole ~~the not~~ world was made up of their
possessions.— The rest was only a nation of
fable— whose shores no mortal ship might
reach.— and their boats never ventured beyond
sight of the native cliffs.— But the voyage
of life opens to pass there a new life &
energy.— Like was an unknown world of realities
beyond.— and soon their galleys towered the
Mediterranean in every direction.— The great
sea of discovery has never since worn away.— It
had columbus & the shores of the new
world.— and even now sustains the men
who press into it.— Time invades the Domains
of the intellect.— in the same manner we find that
it has invaded the polar seas.— It is this
sea of discovery which contains all mental
improvement.— The expanse a time should comes

when science had fully explored the wonders of earth & sky - ~~and~~ had catalogued and explained ~~every~~ every phenomenon - and with the eye of the microscope - had detected at last the ~~ideal~~ principle - to search - Then suddenly quickly, all interest in science would cease -

In every department of thought - continued activity must ever be the effort to bring the unknown within the sphere of the known - To suppose this has been entirely done or that the time will come when the work of exploration shall be finished - is to suppose a time of mental stagnation - when there would be no spur to action for the mind -

Religion with all the rest can only thrive in an air of mystery - The God whose ways are thoroughly understood or whose action can always definitely predicated is not a God to inspire religious [illegible]

The Sun was once an objict of worship — & and his dawn upon the earth - occasioned the dawn of a religious sentiment in human hearts - But when he had been weighed and measured by astronomy - when his path through the heavens had been accurately ~~marked~~ mapped - so that his rising & setting - his Northern & Southern journies - were seen to be fixed as fate - then he was no longer a God - So if it were possible to find out the Almighty - to take his measure & map out his channels of action - Then would we more worship him than this worship the Sun, - The Mind which could comprehend infinity would be infinite - & we imagine that we can thoroughly understand God - We make ourselves as great as he - Hence to cut worship squares - Theology has assumed to make plain the Divine Economy - so far as it relates to humanity - For centuries it compelled all christendom to accept its teaching

as absolute truth- and during the while men believed they had fathomed the divine will concerning them.- The consequence was that God ceased to be worshiped,- the prayer & reverence which belong to him alone were given to Christ - to many Queen of heaven & the long list of saints.- This will be not even needed,- They could control [illegible] of his - no one knew how,- They were to judge the earth - & none knew what favors they should receive at their hands,- They were Egyptians,- and men worshiped them to the neglect of the Almighty.- Only when men discovered that their saints were limited in power, and found out what they could and could not do- only when they had discovered that these images, while God alone is the unknown- whose perfect will- and modes of operation can not definitely be determined, there they [illegible] back gaining to the true worship.- Religion is smothered, like a flower by weeds- when immersed in a solid mass of fact,- whether it be made up of

scientific propositions – or dogmas of belief – It requires the free air of Tragedy for its support.– The Naturalist finds some wonderful mark of design,– in the structure of the lower orders of life – and sometimes a genuine thrill of religious emotion.– But it is not the low wisdom that could which moves his admiration.– It is the great presence-chamber footprint only he has seen to whom his thoughts instantly fly.– Not "how wonderful is the arrangement of this flower or insect in any hand"– but "how great that infinite wisdom– which pervades the universe, as I see it here"– is the thought which kindles his soul –

It is still the unknown God to whom the heart owes its altars.– The same truth may be seen in the homage which men pay to a great human mind.– We never reverence one whom we thoroughly Know.– No man if it is said is a hero to his own Valet.– This is so for one as true to ones intimate friends

who are behind the scenes - the stage illusions which catch the eye of the world as realities are only seeming. - But more than this though we love our friends for the goodness we discern in them, - We only call that mind great which we cannot fathom - & in which there dwells a reserve goodness & power - which is only felt - not seen. - In listening to such an great Orator - as Beecher, - it is not so much the words which actually falling upon your ears - which measure the mans power, - but rather the perception that back of his utterances is a very torrent of ideas - striving to coin themselves into language. When a man pumps up his sentences out of a little shallow pool of thought, - so that he is apparently bringing up his whole supply of knowledge and perhaps borrowing a little out of his neighbors pond. - You do not regard him whatever he may say. - But when his words suggest more than you catch the point - when

they seem to come out of a great ocean of thought - upon which he can draw to an unlimited extent - you respect his utterances whatever they may be - It is the power working behind - unseen & unknown - but only felt - which commands our reverence - It is only this which reveals us to ourselves - for if the thoughts which occupy our brains - the motives which influence our actions - were all of us - we should despise ourselves - The consciousness of a mysterious something within better & nobler than what comes to the surface - can alone keep alive our self respect -

So - I say that religion - feeds upon a mystery - The sentiments of worship are inspired by the presence of This Almighty - touching whom we cannot find him out - - wherever he shall fix - in his own mind a boundary for the love & power of God - strikes a death blow at his own religious nature - -

The cant phrase "glorious indefinite" so often applied to endless religions is literally true. This indefiniteness is their glory. The history of every religion under heaven shows that its decay commences from that moment when theology has so defined God & his modes of action that he ceases to be a mystery. The orthodoxy sects which are now manifest a really vital religion are those which really deny their theology, and pray to God as a being whose ways cannot be formulated. Though perhaps it may be it is to them only the mystery of caprice - not as reason finds no reason - the mystery of laws which we cannot comprehend, but it is a mystery nevertheless - that keeps alive a genuine religious enthusiasm. whereas the churches which hold to the old scheme of redemption, with its predestination & election, its thoroughly revealed God, & ascertained divine will. The churches which hold to this

d[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] intends & proposes.—

Some time it must be recognized that an infallible creed is death to religion.— There is of course no reason why a church should not put forth a statement of belief if it see fit to do so.— But it must be with the understanding that it is only a human attempt to explain an infinite mystery— and not a final and absolute closing away of that mystery.—

There is good reason why the almighty will not suffer us to find him out;— and refuses to reveal to us his will concerning us.— Such a revelation would take away the zest of discovery. ~~and robbing~~ ~~would take away the zest of every hope~~,— would at once suspend all mental & spiritual activity— (and robbing us of every hope would) ✱ (summon) us with a grim gloom of fate— as unbearable as steady heat of a tropical sun,— like tender plants— we must come gradually into the light through twilight & shadows.—

Were it not thus we could not understand

such a revelation were it to be made.—

Suppose for instance that great Mystery, the future life — after whose secrets perhaps we more earnestly strive than any other,— should be clearly revealed to us.— What would be the result further than to remove us of its reality.

Christians are sometimes asked — why — if Jesus came back from the grave — did he not tell to his disciples the secrets of the life beyond — how the soul abides & what its employments are?— The answer is that neither the mind could be magnified by such a disclosure — for we could not understand it.— The schoolboy looks forward to the time when he shall be a man.— He sees daily the completion of Manhood enacted before his eyes,— and his most cherished dreams are pictures of what he shall do when he comes upon the stage of action.

But his conceptions of manhood are all boyish — and he has no real sense of its duties & responsibilities

so we are all but children, in God's Kingdom
and our ideas of immortal life must all be childish
— oh that life were open to our gaze! —
[illegible] of the earth - earthy - and in the contemplation
of heavenly things - even of God himself - we cannot
divest ourselves of material notions. — Our
condition circumscribes our powers - and it
is all in vain, this restless striving beyond our
[illegible] — The imprisoned soul like a caged
bird may dream of airy flights over sunny
fields - but its beating wings strike only the
[illegible] bars of its prison house. — It must fain
be content to occupy itself like other souls who
feel no longing for a wider liberty — until death
shall [illegible] its aspirations, — — And then?
when eternity is ours, shall we at once find
out the Almighty? shall every mystery be fathomed
upon the instant? and our gaze rest upon
that power & wisdom which control the Universe
seated upon a visible throne? — If so — then

do we yield up the charm of living— Existence has ~~for us~~ no further purpose— when there is no mystery before it— to inspire hope & stimulate effort— I rather choose to hold the view of life which teaches that God is— & to all eternity must be— unknowable,— save as man experience shall slowly reveal his purposes & methods.— And this is the destiny to which I look forward;— the ability to go on & on forever,— revelling in the wonders of His Universe— & finding new objects & higher reaches,— without ever coming face to face with God himself—

When I have lived in eternity till I have lost all computation of time,— I expect to find God still as great a mystery as he is to day,— But however that may be— here we are now dwelling in the present life— we are living in the world— while it whirls through a vast & unfathomable space— beyond

which our hopes shine out like the stars
so far away that it seems impossible for
us to reach them,— how little do we really
or — how short to wide science has
commanded out over this gulf of the unknown,—
how imperfect the vaulted revelations given
on high,— science may arrange the forms of
life and marshall the brute forces — but what this
is which thinks — and rules — loves — or what
it's real or possible destiny — science does
not even dare to guess,— it goes the Bible — the
Bible gives us ~~does not~~ hardly hints of an
immortal soul — and the teaching of the new
Testament upon the point is somewhat
unsatisfactory.— I do not say that it is wrong
beyond the bare assurance of a life to come
so far as it does go — but that it only goes a
very little way.— This imperfect system of belief
in which the world has put such confidence is
of human origin, and is based only upon a
few scriptural texts,— whichever way one turns
seems upon a

this mystery confronts us - As was said to Job
"It is high as heaven - what canst thou do? -
deeper than hell - what canst thou know?
Out of a sleep in the unknown we woke to
find ourselves here, - after a little into the
unknown we must return, - and though we
search our whole life long we should no more
find the solid pathway for our departing feet -
than we can find a ladder to the sun, - Many
may have satisfied themselves, that there is
a life beyond the grave, - but so we do not reach
to immortality - any more than by the towers
of Babel men could climb to heaven. - It may
lift us above the immediate flood, - but at
some time the swelling tide of death may reach
us there, - Am I a spiritualist - I am still
open to this doubt - perhaps those spirits which
revisit the earth - are how only survived for
a little time - a shock of death - as in sparks
sometimes survives the extinguishing of a flame -

If that be so it is a misfortune not to die at the beck of the body,— — No- My friends- there is no such thing as perfect knowledge of the Almighty.- — of his will & purposes respecting us,— — We have something more tangible to rely upon- than the mutual & impressible faith which he has implanted in us- a faith strengthened by every — experience & higher truth.— What then- should we despair,— If it were only to learn how little we really know- only to wring from us the helpless cry- "Touching the almighty we cannot find him out" & if it were only for this that we lift our heads above our daily task to gain a wider outlook- then indeed would ignorance be bliss— and unreasoning belief- better than the candid search for truth.

But this is not all- for accompanying the — question comes into our souls- the glorious affirmation The is exultant in power- and in — judgment- & in plenty of mercy- He will not [illegible]

I will not say that a believer in any of the systems of theology which affect to make known a thoroughly revealed God,- cannot affirm the justice of the almighty,- nor that to them the excellence of his judgement must be very dimly discernible.- But this I do say- that the soul which has felt the pressing of the great mysteries of life- and discerned how little it can know of the almighty- has by far the clearest and strongest faith in his goodness.- - I speak from experience as well as from observation when I affirm that while we hold to these old theories which make deity so easily comprehensible- or while we suppose that our notions concerning his government are absolute verities- any such faith as this text speaks is impossible to us.- Only when we are thrown back upon it for support,- does it assert its full power- Not until we are ready to say- I cannot find Him out

and we willing to trust him though he
slay.- for while we think we know all about him
we have no occasion to dismiss our faith,-

And so- though after all these years of striving,
bygone years whose monuments are the proudest
achievements of the human intellect, though
after all the dogmatic assertions - the philosophic
speculations - and scientific inquiry - we stand to
day in the presence of the same old Mystery - and are
as far from finding out the almighty - as was
the counselor of Job, - still it is a mystery as
rosy as the dawn with hopeful promise -
for that sunlight of ~~God~~ divine goodness and
mercy - which in the morning of life falls athwart the
~~cloud~~ clouds and floods ~~the whole~~ the whole earth with
the gorgeous colors. in which life stands dressed
to the eye of youth. - The same sunlight plays
about that western horizon beyond which our
souls must sink - and the evening of our lives
is ever more brilliant than the morning - with the

being pictures which it paints for us upon the background of this infinite Mystery. — We Know not what God is. - ~~X~~ only that this great Power which upholds the Universe - is wise & just and kind. - We know not what the future has in store for us - death or life - Joy or sorrow. - But this we do trust with our whole hearts - that whatever the issue - it shall be still the best - We know not ~~how God shall accomplish our~~ by what paths our God shall lead us - ~~salvation~~ our - to what final destiny. - but since we are his will preserve us from all lasting evil - and crown our lives at length with the best good and greatest happiness ——